

CATHERINE'S HIDDEN LIFE

experiences little more than hysterical phenomena ; nor need the faithful followers of St. Catherine to-day deny this as a possible, or even probable, element in her life. In the record of her revelations, we are confronted with things that are incapable of literal acceptance, that, perhaps, at times even offend our religious sensibilities, occurring side by side with profound truths, expressed with wonderful precision and startling inspiration, shedding light upon every step of the believer's difficult path from the human to the divine. That phenomena not unconnected with organic hysteria existed side by side with the possession of a suprasensible revelation in the lives of many of the greatest mystical saints, may well be granted. It has even been urged, in the case of St. Teresa, that, while suffering in a sense from organic hysteria, her knowledge of the workings of her own soul was so clear and exact that she could distinguish perfectly between these two classes of experiences, the natural and the supernatural, and that this fact is the strongest guarantee for the truth of her account of the latter.¹ Catherine, like Teresa, with her unwavering fortitude and calm resolution, her firm will which was to impose itself upon the rulers and powers of the world, her practical sense and angelic wisdom, is poles asunder from a hysterical subject; yet, perhaps, with all her celestial endowments, this thing was given her as the Pauline "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." She had learned early to discriminate between the two kinds of vision—those that proceeded from her divine Teacher and those that were the work of the father of lies. But I do not think that she could distinguish between the natural and the supernatural in the way that has been claimed for St. Teresa; at times, in her visions, we cannot but detect apparent hallucinations, to which a physician would probably assign a hysterical origin. Yet the abundance of the revelations "is more surely there.

¹ For all this delicate question, see especially G. Hahn, *Les phénomènes mystiques et les révélations de Sainte Thérèse* (Revue des Questions Scientifiques, xiii« PP* 553~5^9» ***• PP* 39~^4)» and c^ ^* ^°*y» *Ptychologie des Saints*, pp. HO, ill, and W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 14-18.